

Serious Games {Developer Program}

GAMES
FOR
CHANGE



Case Study: Supporting Ukrainian Creators in the Serious Games Developer Program

OVERVIEW

The **Serious Games Developer Program** was organized by **Games For Change** (G4C) in collaboration with Global Game Jam and the US Embassy in Kyiv, Ukraine. Participants of the program joined a 2-day workshop on how to develop serious games for impact. Then, they created a serious game prototype with a team of collaborators. At the end of the event, participants pitched their games to a panel of judges and potential investors at the virtual Games Gathering 2020. One winning team received a prize of \$5000 USD to continue developing their game prototype, as well as \$500 USD in Amazon Credits. During and after the program, developers were also mentored by US experts in game development, research, funding and other fields.

EXPLORATION WITHOUT BARRIERS

Fifty-five Ukrainian developers participated in the Serious Games Developer Program, exploring how they can leverage their skills as developers to tackle meaningful social impact issues. By collaborating using Zoom and a Discord Server, participating developers were able to explore best practices, make new professional connections, and seek mentorship from US experts and professionals in the social impact developer community. With the affordances of virtual technology and translation services, Ukrainian speakers were also able to speak with English-speaking facilitators and mentors in real-time during the workshop and game jam.

G4C DEEP IMPACT WORKSHOP

The workshop began with an overview of the social impact game sector and an exploration of case studies. G4C then explored the DEEP Impact framework, where developers discover their problem and audience needs, execute intentional design, evaluate game impact data, and pay it forward to amplify impact on a larger scale. This framework for making, deploying, and scaling serious games acts as a guide for entrepreneurs, developers, and product designers who want to leverage games to address some of the world's most critical problems.

GAME JAM

The following weekend, developers formed teams with their fellow participants on the Discord. The theme 'connection' was selected to encourage collaboration and teamwork, as well as to allow for open-ended developer interpretation on what kinds of social issues to represent in their games. Eleven teams were formed for the game jam, each addressing a variety of impact causes.

PITCH COMPETITION

After the game jam, Games Gathering 2020 hosted a virtual pitch session, where each game was presented to a panel of judges with experience on game design, social impact, and investment funding:

- **Kate Edwards, Global Game Jam**
- **Alan Gershenfeld, E-Line Media**
- **Margaret Wallace, Tilting Point**
- **Bryan Furman, U.S. Embassy Kyiv, Ukraine**

One winning team received \$5,000 USD from the U.S. Embassy Kyiv, Ukraine to continue the game's development, as well as \$500 USD credits from Amazon.

The winning game, *Grand Story* was developed by Andriy Bychkovskyi and Oleksii Netrobenko. In *Grand Story*, you play as an elderly grandmother living in a rural area. Apart from doing your daily routine, you are patiently waiting for a letter from your grandson. The game was made to raise awareness for the problem of loneliness of elder people, especially those who are living in remote areas. A final call to action at the end of the game encourages the player to remember their own relatives and reach out to them while they are still alive. *Grand Story* has since received player testimonials, and has been translated in English, Ukrainian, Italian, and German.



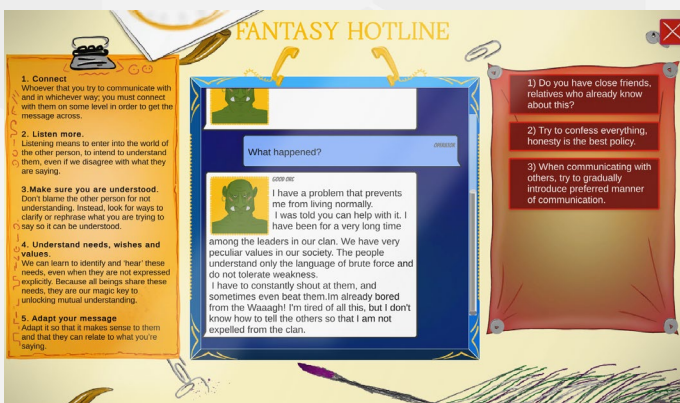
Some noteworthy runner-ups include...



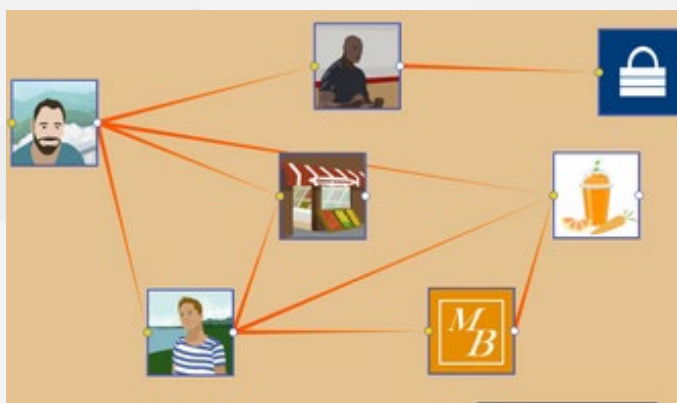
Covidelivery is about a delivery driver who learns the stories of people struggling with COVID-19 at home. As the player gets to know the city, they learn more about the community and its stories. All stories are based on true anecdotes from people in Ukraine.



Tension is a visual story about the complexity of relationships between people. In a world where stress manifests into metaphorical animals, the main character's level of stress is constantly growing. And so it goes until he lets another person into his life.



Fantasy Hotline is a hotline simulation game where the player solves the troubles and worries of fantasy races who are struggling with identity, relationships, and mental health. No matter how different we may seem, we all have similar problems.

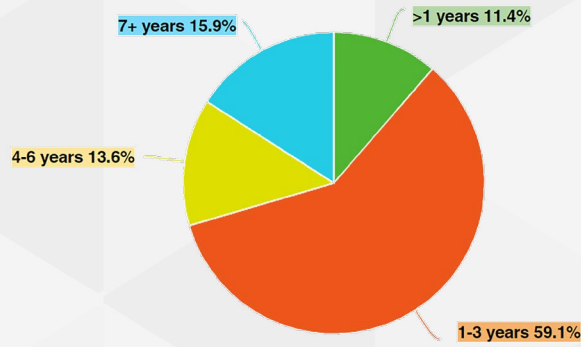


Social Footprints explores the dangers of stalking and social media. Explore the life of an ex-boyfriend, his recent experiences, and his mutual connections from the eyes of an unexpected protagonist. We must be careful of our online digital footprints.

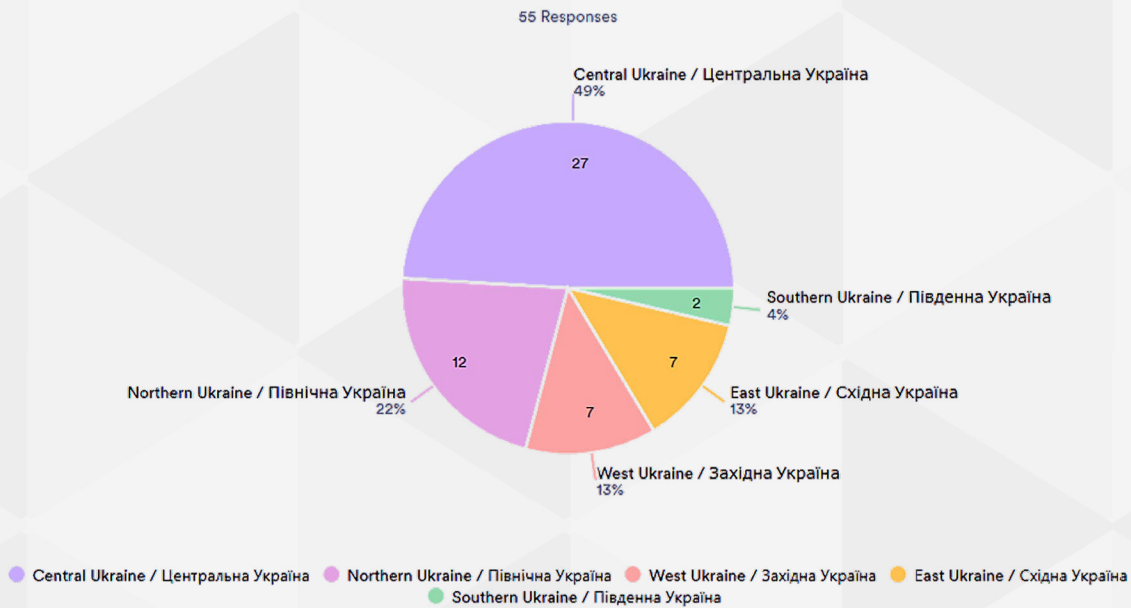
DEMOGRAPHICS

The Serious Game Developer Program accepted participants from a variety of backgrounds and skill levels. G4C collected various demographic information about the program participants such as region, location, age range, and developer skill level.

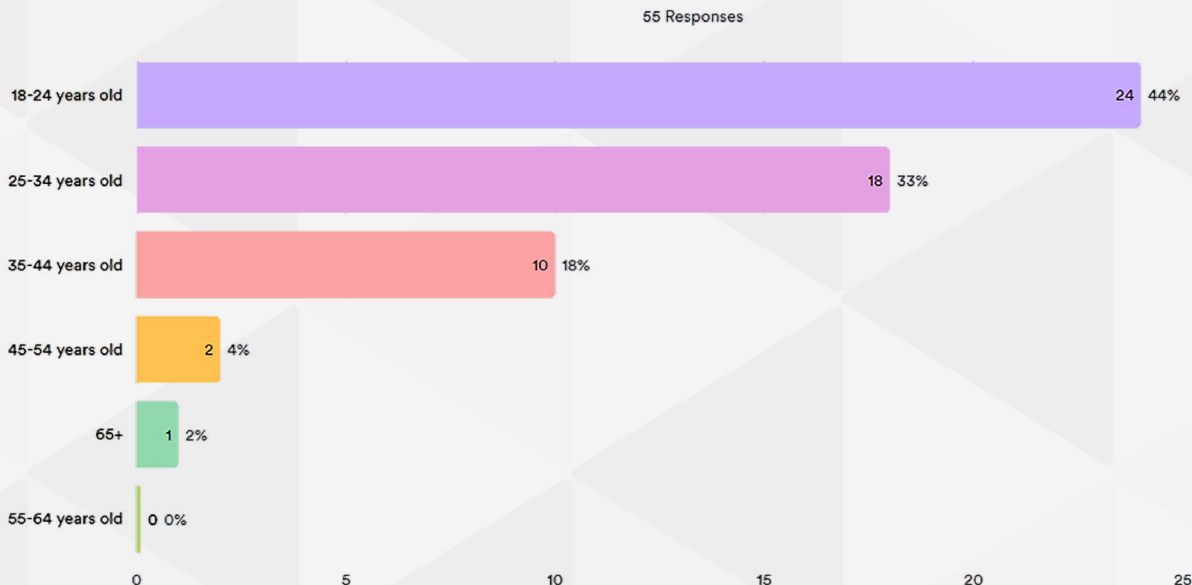
How many years of experience do you have in game development? /
Скільки років ви займаєтесь розробкою ігор?



What region of Ukraine are you based in? / В якому регіоні України ви перебуваєте?



What is your age range? / Оберіть свій віковий діапазон.



FEEDBACK / SURVEY DATA

Feedback about the program was collected from qualitative surveys conducted after the Serious Games Developer Program. The survey results showed all-around positive responses to participation in the workshop and game jam. *Please note that since many developers primarily spoke Ukrainian, some direct quotes have been localized to best support translation.*

Were your goals and expectations met during the SGDP Workshop?

"Yes! I got what I wanted to know and even more. I was able to try to create something with my own hands. I saw how best to analyze and look for investors in the project. Thank you very much!"

"I had a great time, met good people, and learned a lot. The Serious Games Developer Program fully met my expectations."

"My expectations were completely met! It was a great experience! My expectations were exceeded and I was really happy with that."

What did you like about the SGDP Game Jam?

"I really enjoyed the stage of project presentations and hearing about each of the teams and their progress in discord."

"The game jam theme was a very interesting topic. It was exciting to start something new. And the theme was presented well. :)"

Did this program help you develop new connections with Ukrainians in your field? Do you plan to maintain these relationships? If so, how?

"I met new interesting people, and consolidated old acquaintances. I plan to keep in touch with my teammate with the jam."

"Yes! As a result of these connections, we had a great team. We didn't know each other before the jam. But even after, we will continue to keep in touch."

CONCLUSION

After the Serious Games Develop Program, the winning team has continued to collaborate, having their game translated in multiple additional languages. Additionally, mentorship has continued after the program. Each month following the Game Jam, US mentors have met with Ukrainian developers in 'Ask Me Anything' sessions, where they answer questions and explore their history in impact games. Moving forward, Games for Change is well-positioned to facilitate global workshops and game jams in both virtual and in-person formats.